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THE THREE FRANCESCAS.

BY EDITH WHARTON.

THE almost simultaneous production of three plays on the subject of Francesca da Rimini, by play-wrights of three different nationalities, illustrates in an interesting manner that impulse of the creative fancy which so often leads one imaginative writer to take up a theme already dealt with by another. The greatest geniuses have been swayed by such currents of suggestion: there are moments when certain subjects are in the air and present themselves irresistibly to imaginations of the most different order. This is perhaps especially the case when the situation or the story dealt with is one already familiar to the world, when it has grown to be an integral part of human culture, as in the case of the tragedy of Rimini. The Elizabethan dramatists repeatedly exemplified this tendency of the creative mind to remind the currency of fiction, to individualize stock types in its own image. An inexhaustible suggestiveness is the property of certain great stories dealing with universal passions and instincts, and there will probably never come a time when Romeo and Juliet, Lear and Othello do not furnish material for re-embodiment.

Where—as in the plays just cited—a dramatic situation has taken definitive form in the hands of genius, the later comer is of course debarred from deliberate use of the fable; but what is “*Le Père Goriot*” but another telling of “Lear,” and in how many later tales of thwarted love or death-dealing jealousy are the germs of “Romeo and Juliet” and of “Othello” wholly absent? With the story of Francesca the case is different. Here the episode was simply hinted at by Dante, and perhaps even those to whom his lines are familiar will be surprised, on turning to them again, to see how little of the story he tells: so closely

has it come to be associated, in every incident, with his evocation of the two who go forever on the accursed air. Dante gave but the central fact of the great love against which the gates of hell could not prevail; but his contemporaries knew how to fill up this outline with the familiar details of a tragedy still recent when he wrote.

Of the authors now under consideration, Mr. Phillips was earliest attracted by the dramatic possibilities of the tale. His play was written some four years ago; and in a discussion of the three dramas it should therefore come first. Before examining the plays separately, however, it is necessary to find some basis of comparison; since they are too different to be compared at all points. In form, for instance, Mr. Phillips has chosen blank verse, Signor d'Annunzio *vers libres*, rhymed and unrhymed, and Mr. Crawford (for special reasons) a prose simple to the verge of baldness. These vehicles of expression cannot be profitably compared, and one must seek elsewhere for an attribute common to the three versions. This is found in the fact that all three were written for the stage; and from this stand-point they must be considered.

In dealing with so well-known a theme, the dramatist's task is complicated by the fact that he must discount the suspense of his audience. From the first line they are in the secret with him: every spectator knows that Francesca and Paolo love each other, and that in the end their love will be found out and punished. The author, therefore, cannot play on the conjectures of his audience; and suspense being avowedly one of the most important factors in dramatic presentment, he must make up for this deficiency by keeping his characters in the dark and letting his audience become absorbed in their gropings through the labyrinth of fate. From the outset, the spectator knows the doom suspended over the house of Malatesta; and the chief interest in the play must lie in watching "the gods creep on with feet of wool" upon their unsuspecting victims. How, then, has Mr. Phillips fulfilled this condition?

The recorded facts of Francesca's story need amplification to fit them for dramatic purposes, and Mr. Phillips has broken with tradition in making a jealous woman sow the first seeds of suspicion in Malatesta's mind. His cousin Lucrezia, a childless widow who for years has been deep in his counsels, is embittered

by his marriage to the young and beautiful Francesca, and seizes the first chance to hint at the likelihood of his having a rival in his brother. Lucrezia is the most life-like and forcible character in the drama—the only man in it, one might say—but her intervention so early in the play removes the important element of suspense, and makes of the remaining acts a merely episodic progress toward an anticipated catastrophe. Herein lies the weakness of the play. From the middle of the second act the audience knows that Giovanni is aware of his brother's love for Francesca. He is still ignorant, indeed, if that love be returned, or, if returned, how far feeling has been curbed by duty; but these minor considerations, though used with ingenuity, fail to arrest the interest of the spectator, who feels that, since *he* knows, and Giovanni knows, and Lucrezia knows, it is idle to keep up the mystery.

If Mr. Phillips has thus sacrificed one element of dramatic effectiveness, he has missed another by his neglect of local color, both in the atmosphere and in the psychology of the play. Local color of the external sort is, on the whole, an overrated pigment; but there is a subtle way of suggesting the atmosphere of a period and country, of indicating, allusively, the racial point of view and the natural environment; and this Mr. Phillips has failed to do. In a general—a very general—sense, it may be said that such primary passions as love and jealousy are the same in all races and ages; but this generalization will not stand the test of specific application. If the exponents of these passions are to have any more individuality than the vices and virtues of an old Morality, they must be given a local habitation. It is still broadly true that *la morale est purement géographique*, and that, in an Italian and an Anglo-Saxon temperament, love and jealousy do not operate in the same way or with the same results. More especially is this the case when the Italian is a thirteenth-century tyrant, the Anglo-Saxon his modern interpreter. It is safe to say that Giovanni Malatesta (quaintly described in the *Ottimo Commento* as “an open-hearted man, warlike and cruel”) would not have behaved like a gentlemanly Englishman with a tendency to introspection and melancholia. He certainly would not have made such a to-do about killing his wife and brother. It was thus that such matters were settled in mediæval Italy. To a lord of the *haute justice* it was as natural, as obligatory, one might say, to kill

an unfaithful wife with his own hands, as it would be for a modern Englishman to apply for a divorce.

The moral susceptibilities of the other characters are equally tender. Francesca's innocence verges on *niaiserie*, and Paolo is a Werther with a dash of University Settlement. From the first he shuns Francesca's perilous nearness, and when love prevails, and he finds himself powerless to flee, he buys poison and resolves to die at her feet. Giovanni, overhearing the avowal of his love (an avowal which Paolo forces somewhat needlessly on the reluctant apothecary who sells him the drug), is so moved by his brother's suicidal intentions that he exclaims: "I cannot have thee die, my Paolo!" In thirteenth-century Rimini, the chances are that, before Paolo had time to swallow the potion, he would have had his brother's knife in his back; but Mr. Phillips's characters have read "The Data of Ethics" and cultivated the other-regarding virtues. Even the virago Lucrezia, who, at the outset, seems disposed to take somewhat illogical revenge on the world in general for the fact of her childlessness, melts suddenly at an affectionate word of Francesca's, and tries to check the machinery of murder that she has set in motion. If, as Mr. Phillips obscurely hints, Lucrezia's hatred of Francesca is based on a not always unreciprocated passion for Giovanni, it seems unlikely that the young wife's advances should have such a softening effect, especially as Francesca's appeal reveals her love for Paolo; but Mr. Phillips, who refuses to let any of his characters *savourer* their vengeance in good Italian fashion, appears to believe in "changes of heart" as rapid and complete as revivalist conversions.

Lucrezia, then, having been asked by Francesca to "think of her as a little child," is so touched by this request that she dashes out in pursuit of Giovanni, to whom she had previously suggested the classic expedient of a feigned departure, in order that he should return and surprise the lovers. Her repentance naturally comes too late. Paolo and Francesca have to be killed, and the audience knows that, while Lucrezia rushes out by one door, Giovanni will come in by another. In a moment he does come in. He has found and killed the lovers, and he says to Francesca's frightened waiting-woman:

"Is it not time you dressed her all in white,
And combed out her long hair as for a sleep?"

Dramatically, this scene is the finest in the play. Malatesta for the moment ceases to be a modern altruist, and becomes a mediæval Italian drunk with revenge. "And now," he exclaims,

"And now their love that was so secret close
 Shall be proclaimed. Tullio, Carlo, Biagi!
 They shall be married before all men. Nita!
 Rouse up the house and bring in lights, lights, lights!
 There shall be music, feasting and dancing.
 Wine shall be drunk. Candles, I say! More lights!
 More marriage lights! Where tarry they the while,
 The nuptial tapers? Rouse up all the house!"

This is not only fine poetry but good psychology. For the first time since the opening of the play one feels one's self in Italy—at least in the Elizabethan Italy of "The White Devil" and "The Duchess of Malfy"; for, as Vernon Lee has pointed out in "Euphorion," the real meridional went about his bloody business in much more prosaic and instinctive fashion than his northern interpreter could even then conceive possible. Still, such minor differences do not spoil the illusion, for the Elizabethan Italy has long since become a recognized fief of the imagination. But the key soon changes. Malatesta begins to talk of the curse of Cain, and the scene closes, nobly indeed, as regards poetry, but on a note of sentimental fatalism unworthy of the opening. Since we have it on Dante's authority that Paolo and Francesca did not repent in hell, why should Malatesta repine on earth?

If Mr. Phillips has been chary in the use of local color, Signor d'Annunzio has laid it on with a lavish hand. It was of course easier for him, as an Italian, to enter into the psychology of his characters, to brush in their background by those allusive touches which are so much more suggestive than explicit statement. But the element of dilettanteism in his talent has led him to attempt a minute "reconstitution" of the period, so that the thread of his drama is almost lost in a labyrinth of archæological and etymological details. The mere reading of Signor d'Annunzio's list of characters shows how large a part he allots to the episodic portrayal of life in a mediæval Italian city. In a chronicle-play there would have been room for his supernumeraries; but in a psychological drama, of which the direct action is limited to three persons, this swarming of musicians, soldiers, torch-bearers cross-bowmen and so on, affects one as though the figures in the

tapestry hangings of the castle had come down and thrust themselves between the living actors. To keep such a crowded background in perspective requires the large scenic brush of a master-dramatist; and even Shakespeare did not pack his middle distance in the plays where he wished the principal action to stand out in high relief. Moreover, in his dramas of passion, every subordinate character is a necessary link in the chain of action, as in the case of Oswald, the Fool and the rival men-at-arms in "Lear." Signor d'Annunzio lacks the skill to utilize his accessory figures in this way: they are merely put in to "look pretty," as a collector arranges his bric-à-brac.

The result, it must be owned, is distinctly effective. The play unrolls a series of vivid pictures, all suffused with the atmosphere of the old chronicles and the *novelle*. This is the real Italy of the Middle Ages—not the "academy of manslaughter, the sporting-place of murder" of the terrified English imagination, but the bright fierce inconscient Italy of Mattarazzo and Boccaccio. The pasteboard "flies" are replaced by the actual walls of the Malatesta keep, war-dinted, blood-stained walls, frowning over a fortified town of trembling burghers and a land tilled by serfs and ravaged by the mercenaries of rival tyrants. We are in Dante's Rimini.

Signor d'Annunzio has composed a fable in keeping with this background. He reverts to the traditional story of Francesca's marriage—a story of fraud and violence, for the real Francesca was no Patient Grizzel, but a damsel so high of spirit—*d'altiero animo*—that, to trick her into marriage with the deformed Giovanni Malatesta, it was necessary to make her think that his brother Paolo—himself a married man, and sent to wed her by proxy—was to be her real husband. This at once secures the spectator's sympathy for Francesca. She has been basely used, and her husband is a party to the fraud. In the first act, Signor d'Annunzio shows Francesca at her father's court in Ravenna, surrounded by her attendant damsels and her brawling scheming brothers. One of these, Ostasio, who for political reasons is set on the Malatesta alliance, but who wavers at the thought of sacrificing the girl, thus describes her to the notary who is urging the expediency of the marriage:

"Ah, she were worth a crown! How beautiful!

No blade is straighter than the gaze she plants

Straight in the eyes of whoso speaks with her.
 But yesterday she said: 'What man is this
 To whom you give me, brother?' When she goes,
 Her great hair all about her to the knees . . .
 She gladdens me like ensigns in the wind
 Over a conquered city . . . then it seems
 The eagle of our House sits on her wrist
 Like a jessed falcon straining for high prey.
 But yesterday she said: 'What man is this
 You give me to?' *Ah, who shall see her end?*

Eight centuries and the Alps lie between this Francesca and Mr. Phillips's.

Expediency overrules Ostasio's scruples. He imprisons a wandering *jongleur* whom he suspects of having come to Ravenna in Paolo's train, and of knowing that this brilliant cavalier is but a vicarious wooer; and the act closes with the picture of Francesca handing a rose to her supposed husband through the courtyard gates.

The second act shows the interior of the castle of Rimini. The fortress is besieged by Ghibelline forces, and Francesca has mounted to the upper story of the keep. Here she is joined by Paolo, newly come from besieging Cesena with Guido de Montfort. This Paolo is not the carpet-knight of tradition, "more given to the arts than to warfare." A year has passed since the marriage of Francesca, and since then

"Peace and the soul of Paolo Malatesta
 Forevermore are foes in life and death.
 For all about me turned to enmity
 The day thine unreturning foot was set
 Within this fatal house, and mine withdrawn.
 Bloody deeds
 That night did medicine my wounded soul.
 Tindaro Omodei I slew, and left
 His roof in ruins, flinging him as prey
 To the insatiate furies at my heels."

Francesca listens, trembling and invoking the saints; but in that moment of violence and terror their love for each other flames up like the Greek fire blazing about them. This scene, where the air hums with flying missiles and the sky is lit by the flare of blazing roofs, is one of the finest in the play. The lovers are swept into each other's arms by the heightened passion of the moment. Suddenly Giovanni appears. The day is nearly won,

and he comes to tell his brother that the Florentine envoys have brought the good news of his election as Captain of the People. Francesca tells her Cypriote slave to bring a draught of wine to the thirsty warriors. Giovanni drinks first, and then bids her hand the cup to his brother; and she offers it with the words

“O brother of my lord, drink of the cup
Thy brother drinks of”—

a phrase on which the act should have closed.

The scene of the third act is the bedchamber of Francesca, “panelled with pictures from the story of Tristan”. Francesca is reading aloud to her damsels the tale of Guinevere and Lancelot. Presently Paolo arrives from Florence, and the latter half of the act is a prolonged love-scene, closing upon the fatal kiss. It is impossible, without going into detail, to render the incidental charm of this act, especially in its earlier portion, where Francesca talks with the merchant who has ridden in Paolo’s train from Florence. Signor d’Annunzio has drawn with singular felicity on the legends, the poetry and the superstitions of the period, and the *gata brigata* of Francesca’s court live before us like the knights and ladies in the prologue of the Decameron. Dramatically, the effect is less successful, since the situation remains what it was at the close of the previous act.

Signor d’Annunzio, like Mr. Phillips, has had to devise a means of exciting Giovanni’s suspicions. To this end, he has given Malatesta a younger brother, the terrible one-eyed Malatestino, a stripling who might have been drawn from Mattarrazzo’s Grifonetto Baglione. This young bird of prey loves Francesca, and when she indignantly rejects his love, hints to her that he knows her secret and holds her fate and Paolo’s in his hands. She drives him from her, and Malatestino, going to Giovanni, offers to give him proof of his wife’s guilt. One episode in this scene, though quite unrelated to the action of the play, is too characteristic to be overlooked. Messer Montagna dei Parcitadi, one of the leaders of the Ghibellines whom Giovanni has successfully repulsed, has been taken prisoner and cast into the dungeon of the keep. All through the lugubrious scene between Francesca and Malatestino, the captive Ghibelline’s cries are heard. They unnerve and madden Francesca, and at length Malatestino declares that he will go down and silence the prisoner.

Fascinated but helpless, she watches him go, and in a few moments the boy returns, dragging Montagna's head behind him in a linen cloth. "How heavy it is!" is his comment, as he drops his dripping burden.

Meanwhile Giovanni, at Malatestino's suggestion, has planned the usual feigned departure, and Paolo and Francesca forget their peril in the prospect of being for once alone together. The fifth act shows Francesca's bedchamber at midnight. She lies in an uneasy sleep, from which her maidens will not rouse her, because it is dangerous to waken a dreamer—*un cuor che vede*. They talk in undertones by the bedside. One says that Francesca always has her dreams interpreted by the Cypriote slave, Smaragdi; another whispers that she has seen Giovanni and Malatestino ride away under the starlight toward Pesaro, the younger brother carrying Parcitadi's bloody head at his saddle-bow; and a third sighs out that one can breathe freely again, now that the hunch-back and the one-eyed are gone. The whole scene is full of mystery, of fantastic sounds and shadows. Suddenly Francesca wakes. She calls for Smaragdi, the watchful slave, who is always at her side, who never fails to warn her of impending danger. But Smaragdi has vanished. She was last seen washing up the bloodstains on the court-yard pavement, where Malatestino had tied Parcitadi's head to his saddle-bow. The maidens seek her, calling softly down the dark stone corridors; but no answer comes. Smaragdi has been spirited away, and the air is full of doom.

Francesca dismisses her attendants. Suddenly she hears a low knocking on the door; she calls out "Smaragdi," but it is Paolo who enters. The scene moves rapidly to its end. Another knocking, this time loud and furious, tears the lovers from each other's arms. Giovanni bursts in and the brothers draw their daggers on each other; but Francesca flings herself between and receives Giovanni's blade in her breast.

It would have been impossible to do justice to Signor d'Annunzio's drama without dwelling at some length on the exquisite incidental touches which create its peculiar charm; yet it must be owned that these touches impede the action, and that the drama, when stripped of them, shows a complete arrest of movement in the third act. Far different is the construction of Mr. Crawford's "Francesca." Though in the French version (which in-

cludes a prologue) the action covers a space of fourteen years, it moves with a rapidity beside which Mr. Phillips's action drags and Signor d'Annunzio's seems to remain stationary. Yet this impetus is not acquired by mere stage ingenuity; indeed, it is to Mr. Crawford's credit that his skill in the construction of mechanical plots has not led him to turn a tragedy into a melodrama. He has preserved the simple outline which such a theme demands, and his dramatic instinct has saved him from clogging it with unessential detail.

His play was written for Madame Sarah Bernhardt, with the view of its being translated into French; and these peculiar conditions restricted Mr. Crawford to the use of the simplest prose. The English version necessarily suffers from this restriction. In a language which, like the English and the Italian, possesses a special poetic vocabulary, it is hard to render lofty situations in prose without running into colloquialism or bathos. Mr. Crawford has at least refrained from making his personages talk "prose poetry". They use the plainest and most direct English, and the play seems almost like the skeleton of a drama in blank verse.

This nudity makes the structure of the tragedy more salient. To turn from the crowded scene of Signor d'Annunzio's "*Francesca*" to the open spaces of Mr. Crawford's, is like passing from a modern English play with an elaborate stage-setting to the bare *mise-en-scène* of a classic drama at the Théâtre Français, where, if there is a glass of water on the stage, the spectator knows it has its special relevancy. Mr. Crawford, alone of the three authors, has turned to history for the chronology of his drama. According to the old chronicles, Paolo and Francesca loved each other for fourteen years before Giovanni discovered their secret; and, in the original version of Mr. Crawford's play, his heroine is the mother of a girl of thirteen when the action begins. A brief prologue, setting forth the fraud of Francesca's marriage, has been added to the French translation; but the addition, though cleverly made, detracts from the unity and simplicity of the original, and ought not to be included in its consideration.

Mr. Crawford, put to it, like his fellow-dramatists, to invent an effective way of exciting Giovanni's suspicions, has made the daughter, Concordia, the innocent means of her mother's betrayal. In the opening act, Francesca and Paolo are shown in the

security of their long-established relation—a relation which Francesca believes to be completely justified by the abominable deception of her marriage. But a woman's voice is heard in the castle court, shrieking out maledictions on Paolo; and the latter, looking from the window, recognizes his wife Beatrice in the disguise of a peasant. Francesca's jealousy is instantly roused. She couples this mysterious incident with the fact that Paolo has suddenly and inexplicably accepted the post of Captain of the People, proffered by the Florentine government; the woman cries out again, "Paolo Malatesta! Coward! Betrayer!" Paolo, losing his self-command, dashes down into the court-yard, and Francesca, left alone, murmurs to herself: "A woman crying out his name—a woman leading a child—and on this very day he talks of leaving me!"

The next act opens, effectively, with the holding of a court of justice. Malatesta, as lord of the *haute et basse justice*, is to pass sentence on the various offenders who come under his jurisdiction. While the men-at-arms are preparing for the trial, Giovanni chats with his little daughter, and Concordia asks him what has become of the strange madwoman who had so frightened her mother and her uncle Paolo. Little by little, from the child's talk, Giovanni pieces out a fragmentary hint of the truth—enough to rouse a vague suspicion, without directing or defining it. One simply feels that henceforth he will be on the alert. Beatrice, meanwhile, has been seized and imprisoned, and Paolo knows that she will be brought before his brother for trial. This must be prevented, and Paolo bribes the gaoler to let her escape; but Francesca, mad with jealousy, is equally determined that the prisoner shall not be shuffled out of sight. She appears, and insists on Giovanni's summoning the mysterious woman first. Paolo, at bay, makes a sign to the gaoler, and in a moment the latter returns with the announcement that the stranger has strangled herself. Giovanni bids the bearers bring in the body, and himself uncovers the dead woman's face. There is a pause full of dreadful significance, as each in turn recognizes Beatrice; then Malatesta, looking at his brother, says in a tone of solemn command: "Paolo Malatesta, bury your wife."

Francesca's jealousy has been lulled, but Giovanni's is awakened; and on Paolo's soul lies the weight of his wife's death. This psychological situation, brought about with masterly simplicity,

serves to maintain the interest of the two remaining acts. Properly speaking, indeed, these form but one act in two scenes, which together compose the climax of the tragedy.

The scene opens in the walled garden under Francesca's window. Giovanni has set his spies in motion, and learns that Paolo has left Florence clandestinely. Without doubt he has come to Rimini, is perhaps even now in hiding in Francesca's chamber. As Giovanni talks with his wife he hears the casement stir overhead. The day is sultry, and he suggests to her that they should go indoors; but she declares that her room is stifling and that she has come into the garden for air. Every word and gesture confirms his suspicions. Now begins the most masterly scene in the play. Giovanni, the open-hearted and cruel, has transformed himself into a smooth and subtle hypocrite, in order the more surely to compass his revenge. He tells his wife that Paolo has betrayed him, conspiring with the exiled Ghibellines to get possession of Rimini as a base of operation against the Florentine republic. This is no vague rumor—Giovanni has the facts from the Florentine government. Paolo has left Florence suddenly, without warning, and the question is—whither has he fled? "If he is innocent of treason he will either come here to escape from his enemies, or he will go back to Florence and face them. Which do you think he will do?"

Francesca falters: "I—I think he may come here;" and Giovanni answers quietly: "Yes, I think it is likely that you will see him here to-day."

She extracts a promise from Giovanni that he will not move against his brother till he has seen Paolo and heard his defence; but when her husband asks: "Will you give me nothing for this, Francesca?" she shrinks back with uncontrollable abhorrence, and Giovanni, clasping her with sombre passion, cries out: "I love you! I love you! *I shall love you still when you are dead.*"

The scene shifts to Francesca's room. Paolo, concealed there, has heard the conversation between husband and wife, but the two lovers, in each other's presence, are once more forgetful of impending danger. Francesca, indeed, suggests that they should take counsel together for Paolo's safety, but he answers, "Not yet!" and their talk strays back to the days of their early love, and to the book which had betrayed them. "Where is the book?" Paolo asks, and Francesca gives it to him. He begins to read

and then hands it to her. She takes up the tale: "And when Launcelot saw Guinevere's lips—," but suddenly she exclaims: "It grows so dark that I can hardly see." The darkness is caused by a shadow falling across the book; the shadow of Giovanni who, his dagger between his teeth, noiselessly enters by the window before which the lovers sit. He reaches them unperceived, but as his arm is raised, Francesca sees him and flings herself across her lover. Up to this point the scene moves with a sombre rapidity; but its close is marred by a "death-bed speech" from the dying Francesca, which one suspects of having been composed at the request of Madame Bernhardt. Certainly, its effect is to let the play down suddenly from tragedy to melodrama; a fact the more to be regretted, as this is Mr. Crawford's only obvious concession to stage—or rather "stagy"—conventions. Signor d'Annunzio's Francesca makes a nobler end.

Whatever the merits of the two other plays—and they are many—Mr. Crawford has undoubtedly been most successful from the dramatic point of view. He has written the best "acting" play. His action is more rapid and simpler than that of the other dramatists, and has a higher quality of dramatic inevitableness. He has been clever in letting the surprise of the lovers take place without the time-honored device of the feigned departure. The psychology of his principal characters is firmly drawn, and though his play is as bare of metaphor as a tragedy of Alfieri's, it does not lack high imaginative touches, as where Francesca exclaims on the sudden darkening of the light behind her: a touch which suggests, though on a lower plane, such lightning-flashes of significance as Keats's

"So the two brothers and their murder'd man
Rode past fair Florence,"

and Imogen's exclamation on the road to Milford Haven:

"Why, one that rode to's execution, man,
Could never go so slow."

It is curious to note that the French critics, who have written much and favorably of Mr. Crawford's play, take exception at the two most characteristic *racial* traits in the drama: the long attachment of the lovers, and Malatesta's change from a violent and outspoken man to a stealthy smiling assassin. It is at these

two points that Mr. Crawford has shown his insight into Italian character and his courage in departing from stage conventions. He has had the audacity to draw his characters as Italians of the Middle Ages, and not as scrupulous and sentimental modern altruists. Italian fidelity in love was for centuries the theme of wondering comment to French travellers, who saw only a *vieux collage* in the long devotion of a lover growing gray in his lady's service. According to the curious code of sexual morality in Italy, the tie between the lover and his mistress was as sacred as marriage, or was rather in fact what that abeyant bond was in theory; and Mrs. Piozzi, in her travels, gives a quaint picture of an old Milanese lady of noble birth, whose old *cicisbeo*, attended by his old servant, presents himself every evening at the same hour. To those who understand this tradition, the long affection between Paolo and Francesca gives an added dignity and pathos to their situation, though it may prove a stumbling-block to English and American theatrical managers, whose recipe for historical drama consists in dressing up modern characters in the costumes of the period, and permitting the playwright the lavish use of "What ho!" and "Marry come up!" as a satisfying substitute for historic truth and racial psychology.

EDITH WHARTON.